Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1-16 (canceled).

17. (new) A method for machining a plurality of workpieces with a laser beam comprising:

providing a lower pressure plate having a plurality of movable support segments for supporting a plurality of workpices to be machined, wherein the movable support segments are movable vertically relative to the lower pressure plate;

providing an upper translucent pressure plate;

pressing in the upper and lower pressure plates together with a desired contact pressure; and

passing a laser beam from above through the upper pressure plate onto the plurality of workpieces to machine same.

18. (new) The method as claimed in claim 17, including selectively pressing the workpieces on the plurality of support segments against the upper pressure plate wherein only those are exposed to the laser beam.

19. (new) The method as claimed in claim 17, including moving the respective workpieces arranged on each of the plurality of support segments against the upper pressure plate by moving the respective supporting segment in a vertical direction in accordance with a desired contact pressure.

20. (new) The method as claimed in claim 17, wherein the plurality of support segments include individual segment regions movable independently of each other in a vertical direction and are pressed against the workpieces with a desired contact pressure.

21. (new) The method as claimed in claim 17, wherein each of the plurality of support segments is moved in a vertical direction with a first contact pressure until contact occurs with the upper pressure plate, and is pressed against the upper pressure plate, and a second, substantially higher contact pressure is applied during the laser beam machining.

22. (new) The method as claimed in claim 17, wherein, after the laser beam machining, substituting a second identical lower pressure plate fitted with unfinished workpieces to be machined for the lower pressure plate.

23. (new) Method as claimed in claim 21, wherein the lower plate is provided on the underside with a compressed-air connection and arranged on a base plate with a compressed-air counterpart and pressed against the base plate by the force of the contact pressure pressing the workpieces against the upper pressure plate, and the compressed-air connection is sealed thereby.

24. (new) Method as claimed in claim 22, wherein the lower pressure plate is provided on the underside with a compressed-air connection and arranged on a base plate with a compressed-air counterpart and pressed against the base plate by the force of the contact pressure pressing the workpieces against the upper pressure plate, and the compressed-air connection is sealed thereby.

25. (new) The method as claimed in claim 17, including inserting a translucent elastic plastic film between the upper pressure plate and the workpieces.

26. (new) A device for machining a plurality of workpieces with a laser beam comprising:

a lower pressure plate having a plurality of movable support segments for supporting workpieces to be machined, wherein the support segments are movable vertically relative to a top surface of the lower pressure plate;

a translucent upper pressure plate;

a laser for passing a laser beam through the upper pressure plate onto the workpieces;

a pressure generator acting on at least one of the pressure plates for biasing the pressure plates toward each other; and

means for moving the movable support segments vertically with respect to the lower pressure plate wherein at least one of the support segments contact the upper pressure plate at a desired contact pressure.

27. (new) The device as claimed in claim 26, wherein the lower pressure plate includes a pressure chamber for receiving compressed air for moving one or more support segments in the vertical direction.

28. (new) The device as claimed in claim 20, wherein the lower pressure plate includes individual workpiece supports be driven separately from one another.

29. (new) The device as claimed in claim 26, wherein the lower pressure plate includes individual resiliently mounted workpiece supports, and the pressure plate is movable in a vertical

direction by a pressure generator.

30. (new) The device as claimed in claim 28, wherein at least two lower plates are provided which are brought alternately into pressure contact with the upper plate.

31. (new) The device as claimed in claim 30, wherein the lower plate has on an underside a compressed-air opening that is flush with a corresponding compressed-air opening in a base plate.

32. (new) The device as claimed in claim 31, wherein the compressed-air opening in the lower plate is designed as a through bore, and the compressed-air opening in the base plate is designed as a bore with a counterbore for holding a seal.